The Builder.

No. CXXVIII.

SATURDAY, JULY 19, 1845.

IN our number for the 5th of April last,* we alluded to the proposed restoration of that noblest of parish churches, —St. Mary Redcliffe, and stated the amount of subscriptions received, and the desire of the committee to proceed immediately with the works to the extent of their means. We also reported the proceedings of a meeting held in May, whereat it was resolved that the committee should make early application to each of the subscribers for permission to apply his donation to the repair of the fabric forthwith. Since then this has been done, and some of the too-necessary works are to be commenced directly, under the direction of Mr. Britton and Mr. George Godwin. Mr. Britton, it will be remembered, had originally associated with him in this very interesting undertaking, Professor Hosking; and by them conjointly, the report was made on which the committee have been acting up to this time. When the latter gentleman was made an Official Referee, he felt it necessary to resign this work, and, at his recommendation, aided by that of Mr. Britton, Mr. Godwin was appointed by the committee in his stead.

In the first volume of THE BUILDER (page 106), will be found two engravings, representing the interior and exterior of the church in question, as originally proposed to be restored. They will serve to convey to the reader who is not acquainted with the edifice some notion of its style and character, but they give no idea of its extraordinary beauty. The genius, skill, and fancy, which it displays, cannot be conveyed by any small pictorial representation.

The tower is perhaps as fine as any thing in the world, and needs a long study before it can be fitly appreciated. The north porch, with its unique doorway, the boldness and variety of the mouldings throughout, the beauty and skilful arrangement of the groining inside, —are some of the many points which arrest the attention of the examiner, and compel him to admit what a fine appreciation of the beautiful the architects of the middle-ages had. In the latter particular, the groining, St. Mary's is, perhaps, unrivalled for variety and richness. The bosses, too, display extraordinary fertility of imagination, and will repay careful examination; and, indeed, the same may be said of every part of the structure. Although exceedingly harmonious as a whole, it is the work of several eras. The inner north porch, for example, belongs to the beginning of the 13th century, the tower chiefly to the end of the same century or the beginning of the next, and the greater part of the body of the church to the 15th century, although we have ourselves little doubt that much of it was built considerably before that time.

The material of which the building is constructed is an oolitic lime-stone from Dundry, and from various causes is in a dreadful state of decomposition, and in parts, of danger. The parapets are falling and fallen, the outline of mouldings is fast disappearing, the crockets and finials of pinnacles are displaced by the wind, and the whole face of the stone is eroded to a considerable depth. There are, however, few forms at present, mouldings or sculptured ornaments, that could not be restored with truth; but every day will make the task more difficult, and *if left for any considerable portion of time it will become impossible.* One winter even, now that the stonework has reached its present state of disintegration, may do irreparable mischief. We need hardly say, therefore, that we in common with all who look with pride on the noble heir-looms received from our forefathers (*Templa quam dilecta!*) and are anxious that they should be religiously maintained, are well pleased to find that operations are to be commenced immediately. It is painful, however, to learn how small a sum, comparatively, has yet been provided for this noble purpose, namely, little more than 5,000*l.*, nearly half of which, if we remember rightly, is the produce of estates vested in the parish authorities for the repair and support of the church. If St. Mary Redcliffe were destroyed by fire or otherwise to-morrow, so justly proud of it are all the inhabitants not merely of Bristol but of the neighbouring counties, that we are satisfied subscriptions would flow in from all quarters for its perfect restoration. Why, in York, after the destruction of the Minster by fire in 1829, forty-eight thousand pounds were collected in two months! And no less enthusiasm would be displayed in Bristol, Somersetshire, Gloucestershire, indeed all England, were any such calamity to befal Redcliffe church.

But while it remains whole as they believe, they are not roused to any act of munificence. They forget that time (*edax rerum*), is more certain than the flames, and they hardly know that if left alone only a short time longer, the object of their boast will be but a shapeless heap of stones.

The Diocesan Society when applied to, will of course afford a considerable grant of money towards the object in view, and the parent Society in the metropolis will doubtless do so too, but the bulk of the sum required must come from individuals, and we urgently call on the public for their liberal co-operation.

In Bristol alone, where the annual accumulation of money is enormous, much more ought to be subscribed than is yet announced; in fact, we have little doubt that the moment the works are commenced in earnest, additional assistance will be afforded. St. Mary Redcliffe does not simply belong to Bristol, but to the whole world,—it is one of those records of the past that all have an interest in preserving, and from which all may derive advantage. It belongs to history, it belongs to poetry, it belongs to art; and it will be a national disgrace if it be not immediately rescued from its present dangerous condition, and restored in the minutest respect.

We will not believe for a moment that funds can be wanting for such a purpose, but we call on the wealthy inhabitants of Bristol themselves, if they are not disposed to keep the whole credit of the restoration in their own hands, at all events to set a good example. If there had been any public board for the conservation of national monuments, this building would not have been *suffered* to fall into its present state.

A desire for restoration is at this time general in Europe, — Germany, Belgium, France, all are actively engaged in this important task. The last project of the sort in France, and one of great extent, is the restoration of the Metropolitan Church of Paris, Notre Dame,—which is found to require thorough repair and reinstatement, a repair that is to extend to all the works of art contained in it; monuments, cenotaphs, carvings, and coloured decorations. Messrs. Lassus and Viollet le Duc, the architects engaged to effect the restoration, have been empowered forthwith to direct such works to be done as may be necessary to preserve the structure from ruin, and application has been made to the chamber for a grant of 2,650,000 francs or 106,000*l.* sterling, with a statement that the repairs are not merely necessary, but most urgent. A commission was appointed to examine the nature of the works proposed, and there is very little doubt that when they send up their report, the required grant will be made.

At Cologne, the money required for the restoration of the cathedral is immense, still no one despairs; subscriptions daily come in, and the works progress. The town-halls throughout Belgium were in a dreadful state of dilapidation and called for a large expenditure; yet the money has been raised, and in several cases they are now satisfactorily completed. Surely then, as we before said, there can be no cause to fear for St. Mary Redcliffe. Once let the inhabitants of Bristol be convinced, that without interference on their part, restoration will be soon impossible, and we are quite satisfied they will come in munificently to the rescue. We appeal, however, in its favour to every lover of our ancient architecture in the United Kingdom.

* See page 187 *ante*.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ARCHITECTURE FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

THE PHIGALIAN MARBLES.

AMONG the most interesting remains of Grecian architecture, the marbles from the temple of Apollo Epicurius, at Bassæ, near Phigalia, hold a high place. They are not only interesting from their character and style of art, but as fragments of a singular edifice, contemporary with the Parthenon at Athens, and the work of the same architect. It is not an uncommon supposition, that the Grecian architects adopted one model, from which they made no very sensible deviations. But, although modern imitators have contributed to the prevalence of this opinion by adopting the same Ionic capital, or the same victor's wreath in all buildings, sacred or profane, the Greeks were an originating people, and did not restrict themselves to imitation in their architecture. It is true, that instead of trying a new experiment in every fresh building, they made use of the principles of their predecessors, which the voice of public taste had applauded; but they were not less strong in the endeavour to give each building the appearance of an original work; so that we find in all Grecian buildings, that general character of resemblance which is sufficient to mark them all of one style, a scrupulous attention to detail in points, many of which have only lately been discovered, and a marked difference in those details. In the temple under notice, we find some peculiarities, which are the more singular, as existing in a work of the architect Ictinus.

The notice which Pausanius gives of this temple in his "Description of Greece" adds greatly to its interest, as it leaves no doubt that it belonged to the age of Pericles. His words are "Phigalia too is surrounded with mountains; on the left hand by Cotylion, and on the right by the mountain Elaion. The mountain Cotylion is about forty stadia distant from the city. In it there is a place called Bassæ, and a temple of Apollo *the Helper*, the roof of which is of stone. This temple surpasses all the temples in Peloponesus except that which is in Tegea, for the beauty of the stone from which the roof is built, and the symmetry of its construction."—"Ictinus, the architect of the temple of Phigalia, was contemporary with Pericles, and built the Parthenon for the Athenians." The temple had

To learn more about OCR and PDF Compression go to ThePaperlessOffice.org